



Public Hearing Information

US-131 Improvement Study Public Hearing March 29, 2005



**Public Hearing
March 29, 2005**

3:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.

**Three Rivers
Community Center**

**103 S. Douglas
Three Rivers, MI**

This public hearing is your opportunity to voice your opinion regarding the US-131 Improvement Study in St. Joseph County, Michigan. The Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) is seeking your comments on different improvement options for US-131 from the Indiana Toll Road to just north of Three Rivers.

The public hearing will use an "open forum" style. This informal type of hearing allows the public to stop in anytime during the scheduled hours, gather facts on the study, and speak with members of the Michigan Department of Transportation Study Team.

A court reporter will be available to record oral comments. Participants wishing to comment about the study may do so at any time during the hearing. Citizens can also fill out a comment

form and deposit it into the comment boxes at the public hearing site. All written or recorded comments will appear in the transcript of this public hearing. Comments can also be mailed, faxed, or e-mailed to the address on the back of this brochure. The public record will be open for comments until April 29, 2005. We urge citizens to let MDOT know their views on the proposed project.

In June 2005, a copy of the complete transcript including all of the written and recorded oral comments received will be available for public review at the locations listed on page 3.

All comments will be shared with MDOT and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA).

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Study Background and Status

The Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) is committed to enhancing driving conditions and safety along US-131. Between 1994 and 2004, MDOT invested over \$20.2 million in various US-131 improvements between the state line and I-94 near Kalamazoo.

In 1997 MDOT completed a US-131 Master Plan study with input from St. Joseph and Kalamazoo County stakeholders. Support for a preferred US-131 improvement corridor was achieved for St. Joseph County, but there was no consensus for a preferred corridor within Kalamazoo County.

MDOT subsequently began a study to evaluate options for constructing a US-131 bypass around the Village of Constantine in St. Joseph County. Traffic analysis and community input

has led to extending the limits of the study from the Indiana Toll Road to north of the City of Three Rivers. The revised northern terminus is a point one mile north of Cowling Road in St. Joseph County.

Four public meetings have been held between June 2000 and May 2004 to solicit public input on the study issues and alternatives.

In November 2004, a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) was completed and subsequently approved by the Federal Highway Administration. It was published in 2005. The purpose of this public hearing is to solicit public comments on potential improvement options presented within the DEIS. The public comments will aid the study team in selecting a Preferred Alternative.

Project Purpose, Engineering, and Traffic

The purpose of this study is to identify potential alternatives supporting the safe and efficient movement of goods and people. Potential improvements would also support the economic growth of southwest Michigan and the state by improving traffic operations within the study corridor.

Daily traffic volumes along US-131 in the study area range between 8,600 cars per day in the southern end of the study corridor and 20,700 in the northern end of the study corridor. Forecasted year 2025 traffic volumes range from 14,400 in the south end of the study corridor to 34,100 in the northern end of the study corridor.

Traffic and engineering issues addressed by the Practical

Alternatives include the following:

- operational effects of high truck traffic volumes (approximately 13% of total traffic);
- intersection geometrics not meeting current standards;
- on-street parking in the Village of Constantine;
- steep grades and passing limitations between Drummond and Gleason Road; and
- traffic level-of-service (LOS) forecast to be at E (approaching congestion) during peak morning and afternoon traffic flows between Dickinson Road and M-60 in the year 2025.

On the A to F scale used to measure traffic congestion, all segments of the corridor function acceptably (better than LOS F) in 2025 for the No-Build and Practical Build Alternatives.

Alternatives Considered

Five Practical Build Alternatives and a No-Build Alternative are being considered in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). The attached map illustrates the Practical Alternatives. Through a comparison of the costs; engineering issues; social, economic, and environmental impacts; traffic operations; and public and agency comments, MDOT will identify a Preferred Alternative after the public hearing.

No-Build Alternative

The No-Build Alternative consists of only minor improvements and maintenance to the existing US-131 roadway.

Practical Alternative 1 (PA-1) (freeway)

A five-lane roadway on the existing US-131 alignment between the Indiana Toll Road and Brown/Dickinson Road, becoming a four-lane limited access freeway that bypasses Constantine and part of the commercial area along US-131 in Three Rivers.

Practical Alternative 2 (PA-2) (freeway)

A five-lane roadway on the existing US-131 alignment from the Indiana Toll Road to just north of Anderson Road, becoming a four-lane limited access freeway along the existing alignment north to the northern terminus of the project, with the exception of a by-pass around Constantine. PA-2 would be a depressed urban freeway as it passes through the commercial area along existing US-131 in Three Rivers.

Practical Alternative 3 (PA-3) (freeway)

A five-lane roadway on the existing US-131 alignment between the Indiana Toll Road and Anderson Road. From Anderson Road north, PA-3 is a four-lane limited-access freeway with bypasses of commercial areas.

Practical Alternative 4 (PA-4) (freeway)

PA-4 is the same as PA-3 from the Indiana Toll Road to Dickinson Road. From Dickinson Road to north of Broadway, PA-4 would continue as a four-lane limited access freeway.

Practical Alternative 5 (PA-5) (two-lane non-freeway)

A two-lane roadway on the existing US-131 alignment from the Indiana Toll Road north to Brown/Dickinson Road, and from Garber Road north to M-60. PA-5 includes a new two-lane bypass of Constantine, with controlled access points on the Constantine bypass. North of M-60, PA-5 follows the existing US-131 alignment as a five-lane cross section maintaining existing at-grade intersections. North of Constantine, various intersection and roadway improvements are proposed, as are truck climbing lanes between Drummond and Gleason Roads. Potential improvements within Three Rivers include consolidation of driveways to reduce conflict points, and the elimination of two continuous left turn lanes.

Practical Alternative 5 Modified (PA-5 MOD) (two-lane non-freeway)

Practical Alternative 5 Modified (PA-5 MOD) and PA-5 are the same south of North River Road. At North River Road, PA-5 MOD curves northeast and connects with existing US-131 at the existing signalized intersection at Youngs Prairie Road in Constantine. This would become a four-legged intersection and remain signalized. From there PA-5 MOD continues north as a two-lane section on the existing US-131 alignment to north of Gleason Road. North of Gleason Road to the study limits, PA-5 MOD is the same as PA-5.

Social, Economic, and Environmental Issues

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires MDOT and FHWA to evaluate many categories of potential social, economic, and natural environmental impacts for the alternatives under consideration for improving US-131. The DEIS completed for the US-131 Improvement Study discusses the various impacts associated with each of the alternatives in detail. A summary of some of the key environmental impacts is contained in the matrix below. Other key impacts that are difficult to explain in a matrix include neighborhood and community impacts, economic impacts, potentially contaminated sites, water quality impacts, and aesthetic and visual appearance issues. The public hearing transcript will also be available by June 2005 for review at the following locations once comments have been compiled following the public hearing. For further details regarding these and other issues, please see the DEIS at the following locations or at the public hearing:

- St. Joseph County Road Commission
- Fabius Township Hall
- Mottville Township Hall
- Village Hall of White Pigeon
- Constantine Township Library
- Three Rivers Public Library
- White Pigeon Township Library
- Village Hall of Constantine
- City Office of Three Rivers
- MDOT Southwest Region Office
- MDOT Kalamazoo TSC
- MSU Agricultural Extension Office, Centreville

The Draft Environmental Impact Statement is available on the US-131 project website at the following address:
www.michigan.gov/mdotstudies

Category	Criterion	No-Build	PA-1	PA-2	PA-3	PA-4	PA-5	PA-5 MOD
Potential Impacts:								
Land Use^A	Total Agricultural (acres)	0	492	512	571	563	109	39
	Non-Forest/Undeveloped Land (acres)	0	75	49	75	47	6	7
	Recreational Land (acres)	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
	Farmland Preservation Parcels # (acres)	0	11 (195)	8 (144)	7 (242)	8 (256)	5 (48)	2 (15)
Right-of-Way	Required Acres	0	845	925	878	914	134	59
Relocations	Residential Relocations (#)	0	59	110	84	113	8	7
	Commercial Relocations (#)	0	12	64	11	13	1	1
	Community Facilities (Churches, Government Buildings, Schools) Relocated	0	0	2 Churches 1 State Police	0	1 Church	0	0
	Total Relocations	0	71	177	95	127	9	8
Noise	Noise-Sensitive Receptors Potentially Exposed to Levels Exceeding FHWA Criteria	176	6	10	10	9	14	50
Air	No adverse air quality impacts for any Practical Alternative							
Floodplains/Stream Crossings	Total New Stream Crossings (including Separate Service Drive Crossing Over Rocky River)	0	4	4	4	4	1	1
Ecological Resources	Wetlands (acres)	0	16	22.5	23	58	0.5	0.5
	Observed State Threatened and Special Concern Species	0	3	3	3	3	0	0
Cultural Resources	Potentially Affected Historic Sites (#)	0	2	5	2	1	1	0
Traffic	Local Roads Ending in a Cul-De-Sac (#)	0	5	6	7	6	5	2
	Grade Separations (#)	0	12	15	15	15	0	0
	At-Grade Intersections (#)	0	6	3	3	3	8	8
Length	US-131 Mainline Length (miles)	17.2	17.6	17.7	17.2	18.3	17.4	17.6
Cost^B	Cost in Millions of 2004 Dollars	\$0	\$269	\$461	\$289	\$303	\$30	\$25
^A Acreage in land use does not add up because all categories were not shown due to space limitations. ^B Cost estimates include preliminary engineering, construction engineering, pavement, earthwork, structures, and right-of-way.								

What's Next?

Following compilation of the public hearing transcript and comments from the public and resource agencies, MDOT will determine a Preferred Alternative, and then begin the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS). Public and agency comments will help guide the selection of a Preferred Alternative. The FEIS will provide responses to the comments received. The FEIS will be publicly available in the summer of 2006. A Record of Decision will be issued by FHWA, identifying the final Preferred Alternative for design and eventual construction if a Build Alternative is selected.



This document has been published in keeping with the intent of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 and subsequent implementing regulations and policies. The cost of publishing 600 copies of this document at approximately \$2.12 per copy is \$1,271, and the document has been printed in accordance with Michigan Executive Directive 1991-6.

Contact Information

Please mail, fax or e-mail comments to:

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Michigan Department of Transportation
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Fax: (517) 373-9255 E-mail: parsonsb@michigan.gov

Project Website:

[www.michigan.gov/
mdotstudies](http://www.michigan.gov/mdotstudies)

Project Toll-Free Phone Number:

1-877-200-8638

Right-of-Way Acquisition Questions:

MDOT
Real Estate Division
1501 Kilgore Road
Kalamazoo, MI 49001

Phone: (269) 337-3900

US-131 Improvement Study

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